



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

CINDY HYDE-SMITH  
COMMISSIONER

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**October 8, 2013**

**Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and Mississippi Department of Education Celebrate Farm to School Week at Sherman Avenue Elementary School**

The first full week of October is designated as Farm to School Week in Mississippi. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education held their second annual Farm to School Week Celebration today at Sherman Avenue Elementary in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Students had the opportunity to dine with special guests including Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Billy Hudson, House Agriculture Committee Vice-Chairman Bill Pigott, Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools with the Mississippi Department of Education Scott Clements, Vicksburg Mayor George Flaggs, and the actual growers of many of the items featured on today's menu.

Local farmers, including Jerry and Angie Hutto of Waynesboro; Louis Guedon of Natchez; Glyen and Portia Holmes, Rayburn Wade, and Percy Holmes with the Holmes County Food Hub in Durant; and Becky Beard representing the Mississippi Poultry Association, spoke to Sherman Avenue Elementary first grade students to discuss the importance of agriculture and eating healthy fruits and vegetables. Students then escorted the farmers and state and local officials to the cafeteria, where Mississippi-raised chicken, locally-grown butterbeans, grape tomatoes, cucumbers, collard greens, sweet potatoes, and blueberries were served.

Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith commented, "It's wonderful to see schools like Sherman Avenue Elementary making the effort to purchase and serve Mississippi products. This benefits both the students and our farmers. It provides our students with healthy, nutritious fruits and vegetables and teaches them where their food comes from; not to mention, it creates marketing opportunities for farmers across the state. I am proud of the partnership that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture has had with Mississippi Department of Education for over a decade and the efforts being made to purchase fruits and vegetables direct from our farmers."

Through the Farm to School Program, the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce have made successful efforts to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables grown in the state that are served in lunchrooms across Mississippi. "The Mississippi Department of Education has worked

with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce for over ten years to provide Mississippi students with healthy meals and to support our local farmers. Through this partnership, thousands of cases of locally grown fruits and vegetables will be delivered to Mississippi schools this year. The Farm to School program increases student consumption of fruits and vegetables and helps students make better nutritional choices,” stated Scott Clements, Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools for the Mississippi Department of Education.

Mississippi Farm to School Week was introduced to encourage the serving of locally grown and locally raised agricultural products in school meals and to recognize the substantial economic health benefits to farm to school programs. “Vicksburg Warren School District and Sherman Avenue Elementary School are happy to participate in the second annual Farm to School Week celebration. The students, faculty, and staff are working to support local state farmers while serving healthy foods in our school cafeteria,” said Gail Kavanaugh, Child Nutrition Director with the Vicksburg Warren School District.

During the week of October 7-11, many schools around the state will be incorporating Mississippi grown products, including produce, into their menus and holding educational activities. The Delta Fresh Foods Initiative is planning farm visits for two elementary school classes and high school agricultural students, dedicating a high school agricultural class garden, and hosting a meet-and-greet for students, farmers, and school lunchroom staff. Good Food for Oxford Schools will have a visit from USDA Undersecretary Janey Thornton, and students will be taking field trips to local farms. Fresh Start at Emerson Family School in Starkville will have daily activities for the students including a guest chef to prepare a special lunch, a field trip to the Mississippi Modern Homestead Center, a Fall Harvest Fest, and lessons on nutrition. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi will be promoting farmers markets in several counties and will be using school garden produce for classroom lessons and snacks. Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture (MEGA) will be planting a school garden at Brooks Elementary in Shelby. The Stone County School District will be serving local produce and hosting farm visits to schools. The North Delta Produce Growers Association will be providing produce to schools in Quitman County. The Mississippi Association of Cooperatives will be providing local produce to schools and holding educational demonstrations with farmers at schools. The Grace Outreach Community Development Center in Greenville will be utilizing aquaponics to demonstrate how to grow fresh vegetables and fish year-round.

October was designated as National Farm to School Month, by the National Farm to School Network, founded in 2007. Today, Farm to School programs exist in all 50 states. School officials that would like more resources regarding Farm to School Week and Farm to School Month can visit [www.farmtoschoolweek.org](http://www.farmtoschoolweek.org), a website created by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

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Picture Attached.

Cutline for picture:

First grade students at Sherman Avenue Elementary School in Vicksburg welcomed farmers and state officials to their school during Mississippi Farm to School Week. Pictured (left to right) on the front row are Fredasia Harris, Shelby Stewart, and Khalil Thomas. Pictured (left to right) on the back row are Rayburn Wade, Percy Holmes, Jerry and Angie Hutto, House Agriculture Committee Vice-Chairman Bill Pigott, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Billy Hudson, Louis Guedon, Becky Beard, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Portia and Glyen Holmes.



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